

# Letters

## Positive leadership

As NCOs we are responsible for many things. One of the most often overlooked is one of the more important and far reaching. We are responsible for shaping our soldiers' views. We do this in a subtle but direct way with our reactions. Whether we view things as obstacles or opportunities will govern our reactions. These reactions are seen by our soldiers and are used in their appraisal of us and our work. We owe it to them to give them the most positive example of leadership possible.

Bringing smoke: A young specialist once told me, "I could be a sergeant major; I'd like to stand up there and yell." A private at a different unit asked me, "Why don't you walk around and bring smoke on everyone like the sergeant major at basic training did?" There is a time and a place for "bringing smoke." It is important to be able to motivate soldiers quickly and forcefully when the situation requires it. "Bringing smoke" simply because you can by virtue of your rank or assignment can be counter-productive. Most NCO leaders will tell their soldiers about their "open-door policy." If an NCO always appears angry and spends a lot of time chewing out the troops, how many soldiers will risk using the "open-door policy?" This is especially true if the problem is something of a sensitive or personal nature. Fury can be an asset when aimed carefully and used sparingly and judiciously. Your soldiers should fear you when you yell, not because you yell.

Criticisms or corrections should be finely focused on those soldiers that need them. Minor ones should be sent down the chain of command so the appropriate subordinate leaders can do their jobs. In most cases, especially if safety is not an issue, chewing out a soldier in front of other soldiers is not a good idea. It is unprofessional on the leader's part. It is humiliating on the soldier's part. It is usually a waste of time for all the rest of the soldiers.

The leader's assessment of a situation will color the soldiers' assessment of the situation.

As the situation changes, and it will, how we present it to our soldiers makes all the difference in the world. We can walk in and announce, "OK, guys, they're giving us the run-around again." The troops would know immediately that they were getting the run-around again and there is nothing they can do about it. Or, we can walk in and announce, "OK, guys, change #20, instead of doing this we will be doing that." What the troops know in this instance is that change happens, and when it does you respond accordingly. The added advantage is that it teaches the younger soldiers to be flexible and that changes, although undesirable, are a part of life. Rather than getting upset, they simply shift gears. These young soldiers are tomorrow's NCO leadership.

Gripping and complaining are considered to be inalienable rights of soldiers. Once you become an NCO you waive some of these rights. Your opportunity to blow off steam, get it off your chest, or vent is limited to peers, somewhere away from subordi-

nates. Your soldiers deserve that. We will always be at the mercy of someone or something. If it's not "those guys up at headquarters," it will be the weather, or the budget or something. Any task can be done well under ideal conditions, adversity is an opportunity to excel.

*Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) John Hurley*

## The key to motivation

The Army defines leadership as "the process of influencing others to accomplish the mission by providing purpose, direction, and motivation." If leadership is this three-legged stool, one of the legs is not holding enough weight. Purpose and direction are easy to quantify, but motivation is a soft subject that often is hard to grasp and employ. Motivation is something that causes a person to act in a certain way. Too often we think of medals, ribbons, and other such awards as motivational tools. Or worse, we use the threat of punishment as motivation. Recent studies of large groups of employees in the civilian sector have discovered some surprising observations about motivation that apply even more critically to the military.

In 2002, the Gallup organization began to get press on a study they had completed. Gallup is best known for its political polling in elections, but does many kinds of polling for a wide variety of purposes throughout the year. Gallup was researching what motivated employees. They polled over 300,000 employees in thousands of companies and discovered some troubling facts for the supervisors (leaders) of these companies. Between 50 and 60 percent of employees (subordinates) are not doing their best work because they are not excited about their leader's goals and feel that their own needs and contributions are not important. Additionally, between 15 to 20 percent of employees are achieving less and feeling less enthusiastic about their work than they could be. On the high end of the percentages, this means that 80 percent of personnel are not performing to their potential. The cliché in many organizations is that "10 percent of the people do 100 percent of the work." Gallup's findings show this fact is not far off the mark. Gallup's conclusion through the details of the study was that leaders are treating subordinates like they were rational beings. Leaders need to be reminded that people are foremost emotional beings. The challenge of a leader, therefore, is to create emotional incentives.

Many factors were used to rate an employee's emotional incentive, or engagement in the organization. Replace motivation with any of these terms and the meaning and result is the same. The top ten were:

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have proper materials and equipment to do my work.
3. I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the past week I have been praised for doing good work.
5. My superior seems to care about me as a person.
6. Someone at my work encourages my development.

7. My opinions seem to count.
8. My units mission makes me feel my job is important.
9. I have a best friend at work.
10. In the past six months someone has talked to me about my progress.

As NCOs, our responses are obvious to many of the above. For instance, items 1 and 10 can be addressed easily by the counseling we are required to do with our subordinates. What was striking about the list was what was did not make the top 10 motivating factors in tying someone emotionally to an organization. Note that there was no mention of compensation time, awards, bonuses, parties or celebrations.

Bob Nelson, of Nelson Motivation Inc., has made a career out of teaching civilian organizations how to give employees a sense of “empowerment,” or – in military jargon – motivation. He has authored several books on the subject. He states that productivity is not driven by only wages and other rewards, but by “recognition of a job well done” and “a sense that they are appreciated and included in the operation.” Nelson’s polling resulted in equally dismal results, less than 50 percent of employees said their organizations were great places to work. Nelson’s comment for the civilian supervisor is just as applicable to the NCO: “Finding creative ways to keep up morale and improve productivity is a huge challenge.” His study of traditional awards was even more damning than Gallup’s. He found that when supervisors expressed thanks in typical ways such as cash or awards, it sent a message to workers that unless they got these things, their contribution was not important. He found that workers who were motivated and felt connected to their organization had trust in their leaders, were shown that their opinions were valued, and were kept in the loop and supported when they took the initiative. Nelson said that people work for people, not for organizations, and that this is truer than ever in the age of the often abstract organization of today with fax machines, e-mail and people changing jobs and/or careers many times in their lives.

It is more important than ever to build and strengthen a relationship between you and your soldiers, to set high standards and give your soldiers every tool and opportunity to achieve them. You must care for, praise, encourage and value your subordinates. Only then will you draw the best out of them. In an age of increasing “op tempos” and tightening of resources, we cannot afford to have any soldier “disengaged” or unmotivated. NCOs have major advantages over civilian leaders. We are part of a chain that stretches back more than 200 years and across thousands of battlefields. Nothing builds ties to a unit like the unit’s history, esprit de corps and team building that the NCO Corps can produce.

*Sgt. Maj. John J. Blair*  
*9th Theater Support Command (U.S. Army Reserve)*  
*Fort Belvoir, Va.*

## Discipline and Respect

As a junior NCO in the Reserve component, I am extremely frustrated with the lack of discipline in following customs and courtesies. Soldiers do not show the proper respect to NCOs or officers. I see it not only on [drill] weekends but also in the full-time force.

It all starts when soldiers return from basic [training], [advanced individual training] or [one-station unit training]. Everyone learns during their soldierization process what is proper. Our soldiers come back disciplined and well-mannered. After a few months, however, they lose their discipline and military bearing because their section NCOs don’t continue setting the example or enforcing the standards as their drill sergeants did during training.

I have high expectations of my soldiers and make on-the-spot corrections whenever necessary. During [drill] weekends I make corrections when soldiers stray from the standards of parade rest, attention, saluting and addressing NCOs and officers properly. The problem I’m having is that same soldier can turn around and see a senior NCO or officer doing the same thing.

Things such as this will not change until it is forced from the top down, not the other way. I look to our senior NCOs to set the example, enforce the standards and expect more. I’m sure I’m not the only NCO going through the same trouble. Any advice would be very appreciated.

*Cpl. Robert G. Olinger*  
*Fairfield, Iowa*

## Preparing for deployment

So you have been notified that you are deploying in support of one of many operations that our Army is currently engaged in; welcome to the club. The companies busily prepare their units to load up, jump on the iron bird and touch down in their new home away from home. Wait! What did the NCO support channel do to get the soldiers ready? Here are some ideas of how I had my senior NCOs crack that nut.

Promotions: I had every one of my sergeants and below put together their “I Love Me” books to hand carry on deployment. My first sergeants checked each book to verify all pertinent data was in “The Book.” When my soldiers made the cut-off score, they knew that they made it. Their points are not suspended nor must they provide any source documents to “prove” that they made their points after redeployment. We made sure that the soldier would only have to go through this once. My lower enlisted soldiers who compete for those ever so few waivers are also covered. Their first sergeants do not have to guess if they attended a school or completed correspondence courses, they know. The commanders also know that they are selecting the best qualified and the right soldiers for promotion.

Equally important is the centralized promotion boards. I directed that all my staff sergeants, sergeants first class and master sergeants have a DA photo before we deployed. We did this early on so that their first sergeants and I had an opportunity to check the photos and provide feedback to the NCOs. They also reviewed and updated their DA Form 2-1 and Enlisted Records Briefs. Every NCO took their Official Military Personnel File on the deployment.

Counseling files: The company put the soldiers counseling files in as part of the orderly rooms’ packing lists. It was imperative during the deployment as not all the soldiers deployed with their predeployment supervisors. There were too many instances where a soldier’s previous counseling was critical to making decisions about that soldier’s assignment or other decisions. The counseling files assisted us in writing awards, NCOERs, recom-

mendations for Audie Murphy and Maj. Gen. Aubrey “Red” Newman boards, promotions and even disciplinary actions.

Concerning NCOERs, close out the NCOERs prior to your deployment when possible.

Training files: Simply having a “soft copy” of the training files is insufficient. Although our electronic training database files are extremely useful in tracking dates of rank, weapon qualifications, physical fitness data, clothing sizes, etc., the electronic files are not a substitute for some of the “hard copy” documents found in the training files, especially weapon qualification and Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) scorecards, which are needed for sergeant and staff sergeant promotion point computation. When deployed soldiers take APFTs, requalify on their assigned weapons, become Combat Lifesaver certified or recertified, etc., the training NCO simply places the results in the existing training files, as opposed to creating entirely new training records to be reintegrated with home-station records after redeployment.

One last point, ask your signal officer or network specialist to download your e-mail and desktop files. I was saved much anguish by bringing my home station e-mail personal folders with me. I also downloaded all my computer files on CD.

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## FLPP flop

I agree with Staff Sgt. Brett Beliveau’s view of the removal of the Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP). My second language is Spanish and I constantly have to use my language skills to communicate with the retired and active-duty family members (not to mention military foreign nationals). To keep other languages and indiscriminately omit others and yet take advantage of bilingual soldiers’ value of selfless service is somewhat unethical. Our government can afford to maintain the incentive. Keep FLPP as a “one for all and all for one” concept.

*Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Herb Rivera  
Walter Reed Army Medical Center*

## A fix for branch certification

With the current focus on branch certification we as an Army are starting the good old check-the-block era, just like the Vietnam War, where leaders were rotated in and out of combat units to get “the right amount of command time to someday receive a star.” If you have never read *Self Destruction, the Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era*, do so, it is very insightful on what went wrong with our leadership in the late ‘60’s and into the ‘70’s.

I fear we are repeating history with our current branch qualification focus. I would like to offer some insight on the current branch qualification process, its problems and a suggested fix.

In Armor, a staff sergeant is considered branch qualified after 18 months successful Tank Commander time. A sergeant first class is considered branch qualified after 18 months successful Tank Platoon Sergeant time.

We in Armor are counting [Table of Distribution and Allowances platoon sergeant] time, but I can see where we may

need to because available platoons out there and the three-company concept forces this to be standard practice.

The problem we run into is the standard of what branch certification really is. I have seen several cases but I will discuss one. I have a staff sergeant in my unit who was a promotable sergeant Tank Commander for 10 months, then was promoted to staff sergeant. Two months after that, he received his annual NCOER rating him for 12 months as a staff sergeant Tank Commander.

Another six months passed and he is on orders. He receives a Change of Rater NCOER for six months and there you have it. A soldier who has been a staff sergeant for a whole eight months and he is branch certified as a staff sergeant Tank Commander. This is a failure of the system.

It is essential that we keep our leaders in position so that they become proficient in their branch-qualifying jobs; branch qualification should be for that grade and that grade alone, not completed by adding time from the previous grade.

How do we fix this? I propose that once an NCO is promoted he receive a Complete the Record NCOER stating he has entered the new grade. This does not have to be a formal evaluation as the soldier may have just received a rating. But a Complete the Record NCOER would show that there is no doubt as to when the soldier started branch certification for his current grade.

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## Counterproposal for rank and insignia

After reading April 2003 issue’s letter from Sgt. Maj. [Osvaldo] Vasquez about changing both “insignias” and “verbiage” for NCOs, I had two thoughts: A respectful “Whoa!” to the plan for any drastic change to the uniform and a profound “Tracking” on Sgt. Maj. Vasquez’s idea for the wordage used for NCOs. I say “Tracking,” as he is close, but don’t “Fire” yet. I don’t see a problem in the way Army NCOs are titled. His example, sergeants. But I feel the Army could do better with the way NCOs are addressed when spoken to.

My time in joint training environments, especially while at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, showed me that some other branches [of service] actually have it right. As a platoon sergeant for a multi-branch platoon, you should have seen my platoon members’ faces, when I introduced myself, sergeant first class, and explained they were to call me “Sergeant.” Several NCOs [from other services] asked me to reconsider not being called “sergeant first class.” I stuck by the Army way and told them to adjust. It took weeks for the NCOs, but for the junior enlisted – out of respect for my rank or fear of their senior NCOs – it was just plain *hard* for them to not show me the respect of using my full title.

That’s my take on Sgt. Maj. Vasquez’s letter. It opened dialogue and thought. Thank you, Sergeant Major. Perhaps this could be another positive legacy for Sergeant Major of the Army [Jack] Tilley (to go with his hooah one-arm push-ups). With his request that full titles be spoken when addressing NCOs, he could be the Sergeant Major of the Army that puts just a “little more pride” in making staff sergeant, sergeant first class or master sergeant.

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# Journal strives to provide useful information

This issue of the *NCO Journal* is dedicated to all of the soldiers deployed around the world. It's been a long, dangerous mission with no end in sight. Hopes are that they will return home safely and soon. With that in mind, several of this issue's articles focus on combat and redeployment concerns.

Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class George Loucks' article takes an in-depth look at combat fatigue and how to fight it. Loucks provides valuable information for every NCO going into a combat zone or even an extended training exercise. (See page 12.)

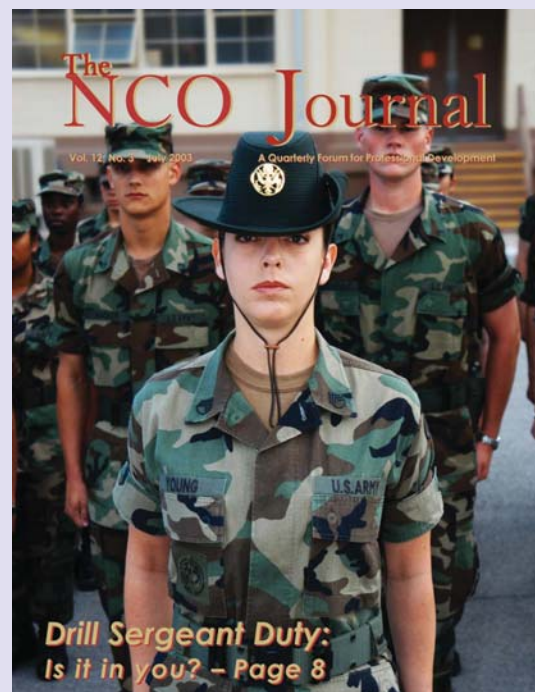
While combat stress is a known enemy that soldiers face, the great unknown and anxious expectations of returning home from deployment is an area where soldiers often tread on unfamiliar terrain. Sgt. Maj. Lon Crosier helps explain a new program, the Deployment Cycle Support plan, that helps soldiers cope with the redeployment and readjusting to homelife. (See page 15.)

National Guard and Reserve soldiers returning from deployment sometimes have a unique set of circumstances with which they must cope: will their civilian jobs be waiting for them? A Department of Defense organization, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, works to inform Guard and Reserve soldiers of their lawful reemployment rights and to mediate any conflicts between Reserve soldiers and their civilian employers.

As for active-duty soldiers returning home who are thinking about "What's next?" Gen. Kevin Byrnes, the Training and Doctrine Command commander, may have a suggestion: Drill sergeant duty. See page 8 if you think you are up for the task of training the Army's ultimate weapons, new soldiers.

As with every issue of the *Journal*, we try to provide NCOs with news they can use. This quarter, we focus on assets available on the Worldwide Web, including a user's guide to Army Knowledge Online (AKO) and a two-page tear-out of Web site resources that may come in hand.

Please remember, the *Journal* staff is always looking for articles, commentaries, letters to the editor and photographs. Submitting articles or photographs to the *Journal* is a great way to spotlight your command or installation. Thanks to all of you who have and continue to contribute.



I would also like to thank all of you who took the time to complete the *Journal* readership survey. The response has been so strong that we are still compiling the results. We'll give you the whole breakdown in our October issue.

And, lastly, we have some folks we'd like to welcome and others we'd like to farewell. First, I'd like to welcome our new directorate chief, Sgt. Maj. Glenn Wagner. Although Sgt. Maj. Wagner does not work on the *Journal* on a daily basis, he's quickly become one of our greatest supporters. I'd like to welcome Sgt. Maj. Kelvin Hughes. Sgt. Maj. Hughes is a field artilleryman that recently graduated the Sergeants Major Course. He's helping us while he awaits his assignment as a battalion command sergeant major.

We also have two new journalists on board, Sgt. Chad Jones and Spc. Matthew MacRoberts.

Sgt. Jones just PCSed from the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Public Affairs Office.

Spc. MacRoberts previously served as an active-duty Infantry soldier and most recently served as a journalist in the Army Reserve 361st Press Camp Headquarters, Fort Totten, N. Y. I believe these soldiers will be great assets to the magazine.

And lastly, we say farewell to two *Journal* staffers, Sgt. Jimmy Norris and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class (Ret.) Phil Tegtmeier. Sgt. Norris is leaving to become a staff member on the Fort Bliss, Texas, newspaper, the *Monitor*; Phil has left to return to his adopted home in Italy.

One last farewell I must note is that of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy commandant, Col. Michael Enneking. Col. Enneking, a former NCO, truly understands the value of NCOs. He has given the *Journal* staff tremendous support for which we are eternally grateful. He leaves the Academy to serve as the Inspector General for the state of Oklahoma. We wish him the best.

As always, we remember those who are forward deployed. They are in our thoughts and prayers.

Master Sgt. Lisa Hunter  
Editor in Chief